Mother Mary Veronica

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MOTHER MARY VERONICA

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Mother Mary Veronica

Foundress of the Sisterhood
of the Divine Compassion

A Biography
by
Rev. Herman J. Heuser, D.D.

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Preface

WHOEVER had the grace of being intimately acquainted with the subject of this biography is indebted to God by another obligation of gratitude. Nothing is more inspiring than the example of great personalities, great, that is, in the Kingdom of Christ.

In the picture unrolled before us in this biography Mother Veronica appears not individually, but associated with another great character, her spiritual guide, while both are associated with a lasting work, a vigorous tree planted by them in Christ's vineyard. To those who were allowed to look into the depth of her great soul this picture brings an added inspiration.

The contact between two noble characters like Father Thomas Scott Preston and Mrs. Walter S. Starr could not but result in some noble work for the glory of God and the benefit of man. Father Preston had been

guided by the Spirit of God from the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church to the Catholic Fold in 1849, when Mary Caroline Dannet was yet a child of eleven. While he was advancing in his spiritual career to the priesthood, to the chancellorship of the Archdiocese of New York, and to the rectorship of St. Ann's Church, she was wandering from the Baptist Community to the Congregationalist, thence to the Swedenborgian, until she landed on the shores of Rationalism. Nor did she find happiness in her marital union, although her later life proved her to have a mother's heart a thousandfold. At the age of thirty, Providence disclosed to her what was to fill her great soul and inspire her extraordinary powers, the Kingdom of God with its mysteries, its precepts, and its sacraments.

Meeting Monsignor Preston, receiving conditional baptism, and founding a Catholic settlement were almost simultaneous, all in the year 1868. How the first sewing school developed into the Association for Befriending Children, how the House of the Holy Family had its lowly beginning on the west side of New York, then, passing to the East Side, finally grew into a magnificent institution on Second

Avenue; how the constitution of a new sisterhood were composed by Monsignor Preston and approved by Archbishop Corrigan, — all this is narrated in the following pages. That the work was not based upon human wisdom and strength is evidenced by the fact that Monsignor Preston did not live to see its best fruits. He was, indeed, instrumental in the foundation of the Mother House at Whtie Plains in 1890, but he passed to his reward the year after. From Heaven he saw his work crowned by the splendid chapel and the spacious convent at White Plains, and in New York by that source of untold blessings to the City, the Catholic Girls' Club. Well could the Mother General of the new order sing her "Nunc dimittis" and lay her weary frame near the artistic shrine of her guide and father.

Various and contradictory were the judgments passed on Mother Veronica. The outside world respected the woman of extraordinary business foresight, the resourceful manager of affairs, who knew how to deal with lawyers and property owners, how to settle debts and legacies, title deeds and purchases. Some viewed in a spirit of criticism the facility

with which Mother Veronica fathomed weakness of character in the men and women with whom she dealt and whom, when occasion required, she ruled with equal facility. The children under her care admired her self-poise of character, the calm of her master mind, her tact in household affairs, her practical decisions, rarely at fault. But with all this they experienced every sweet virtue of the gentler sex, her sympathy, kindness, and patience mingled with an extraordinary power of persuasion.

Friends and associates, some of them less endowed with original native force and less prompted by the Holy Ghost, felt the power of her initiative and even boldness of enterprise, her immense positiveness, her strikingly fearless action and resistless will, her superior purpose to stand her ground for God and for souls. Some, overpowered perhaps, retreated in half-heartedness and even coldness.

It was not given to many to look into the depth of her great soul, that hidden sanctuary where God alone reigned, where plans were inspired and strength had its source. Only a few spiritual guides saw in Mother Veronica the humble child leaning on their counsel and

adjusting herself to their obedience. They alone witnessed the complete surrender of her native faculties, of her rich inheritance, her culture and her ambitions,—in short, of her whole life to the cause of Christ's Kingdom.

There was a twofold life in Mother Veronica, combining both orders, the earthly and the heavenly, and either unintelligible without the other. With Blessed Mother Barat, she too had experienced that "nothing can resist a soul united with Jesus." Herein lay the secret of her prudence, of her undaunted energy, of her steadfast perseverance amid fatigue, disappointments, and opposition.

Mother Veronica is one more living lesson of how much Holy Church, especially in America, depends on sisterhoods for the care of the poor and the fallen, and for the preservation and education of her children.

J. G. HAGEN, S.J

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THE SISTERHOOD OF THE DIVINE COMPASSION

Mother Mary Veronica

The Sisterhood of the Divine Compassion

"I HAD supposed," writes Montalembert, at the close of his most brilliant historical study, "my task at an end; but I hear the sound of a choir of sweet and pure voices which seem to reproach me for having left in darkness one side of the great edifice I have undertaken to reconstruct in thought. These voices have no plaintive sound, but they are full of a soft and overpowering harmony which has never been sufficiently celebrated before men. The souls whose sentiments they utter do not complain of being forgotten; it is their chosen condition, it is their desire." From the days when first the Church of Christ assumed her gentle rule over the hearts of God's children it became her beautiful task to draw into her train following the Spouse the fairest souls; and thus there came forth from the humble

home of peasant and the palace of the king, from all countries and conditions, a chaste and radiant generation of virgin-daughters, who, standing

Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet,

felt the impulse to turn away from the dazzling delights of life to breathe the purer life, and look only upon the fairer glories of heaven. And as the historian takes us back in spirit to the times and customs of the religious communities which he is describing, and pictures in his exquisitely tender way the saintly grandeur of the lives of these devoted women, the holy sight arouses in our minds and hearts a keen appreciation of their extraordinary courage and energy, an intense admiration for them in their lofty efforts and noble sacrifices, and a deep, abiding reverence for the exalted position they occupy in the history of the Christian world. "They are the flower of the human race," he tells us, "a flower still sweet with the morning dew, which has reflected nothing but the rays of the rising sun, and which no earthly dust has tarnished, — an exquisite blossom which, scented from afar,

Mary Caroline Dannat
at the age of seven

fascinates with its pure fragrance even the most vulgar souls. They are the flower, but they present to us also the fruit, the purest sap, the most generous blood of the stock of Adam; for daily these heroines win the most wonderful of victories by the manliest efforts which can raise a human creature above and beyond all earthly instincts and mortal ties."

It might appear at first sight that the Sisterhood of the Divine Compassion, with scarce a score of years' existence, could hardly hope to enjoy the fulness of the halo of heavenly light that surrounds the glorious bodies of religious women who have graced the Church from the days of the Apostles; but there are, in its founding, and about those who were instrumental in the fostering of its first growth, too many unmistakable signs of Divine favor to allow us on account merely of its youth to underrate the work done by this zealous Community. The establishment of the Sisterhood was, like so many other religious societies that eventually assumed the canonical form of religious communities, the result of patient working on the part of a little band of single-hearted women in the world, — Mrs. George V. Hecker, Mrs. Addis Emmet, Mrs. M. E. Mac-

dowell and others. These set out under the leadership of Mrs. Mary C. D. Starr — whom we afterwards meet in religion as Mother Veronica — to practise for the love of God and their own sanctification a work of mercy and benevolence which subsequently proved to be one of the most self-sacrificing kind. The ultimate form which this work assumed in course of time was due to the initiative which a zealous and holy priest took in furthering it, and it is gratifying to know that the general approbation which the Institute elicited from all sides in its very beginning, together with the eagerness and enthusiasm of those who were to be the first members of the new religious community, whose every undertaking was abundantly blessed from the outset, amply recompensed Father Preston for the days and nights spent in prayer for light and guidance, and made him realize some of the fruits of the labor he had undergone in fashioning out of the humble beginning at St. Bernard's Church a permanent organization, which is to-day counted among the most efficient religious charities of New York City. The growth and development of the Sisterhood of the Divine Compassion is so interwoven with the last twenty-five

years of Monsignor Preston's pastoral activity that we need hardly apologize to the reader if we digress for a moment to recall here some of the many interesting events of his life.

FATHER PRESTON

Father Preston

THOMAS SCOTT PRESTON was born at Hartford, Conn., in July of 1824. Like his father, Zephaniah Preston, a man of high moral and social standing among his friends and neighbors, Father Preston was reared in the Episcopal Church. As a boy in the heart of Protestant New England, and as a student at Trinity Church, Hartford, he felt himself drawn to the service of God, and resolved to lead a life of celibacy, in order to devote himself entirely to the work for which he felt himself called by God. He graduated at Hartford in 1843, at the age of nineteen, and three years later entered the Episcopal ministry. During his student life at the Episcopal Seminary he was the leader of the High Church party, and was daily approaching unconsciously nearer and nearer to the True Church. Ordained in 1846, he became an assistant curate to the Rev. Dr. Seabury, whose grandfather had been the first Episcopal Bishop in the United States. Subsequently he was

stationed at old St. Luke's Church on Hudson Street, New York City. During this period he became gradually convinced of the validity of the claims of the Catholic position; and it was not long before he resigned his charge and asked to be received into the one true fold of the Apostolic Church. This was in 1849, and, like John Henry Newman, who had found the heavenly light of restful faith some four years before this time, he recognized as the direct influence of his conversion only the working of Divine grace in his own heart. In a brief record of these days, which was written shortly before his death, and which breathes the spirit of the Apologia, he says:

"I was very young. Many whom I reverenced pointed in another direction: but they could not alter my conviction. If I gained a step one day, I did not waver and change my ground on the next day. But they had the power to make me wait and watch at the door when the goal of my life was in sight. They bade me beware of the impetuosity of youth, and charged me to weigh well the arguments of those who had studied long the points of controversy. I may say that I examined those arguments well. I remained in the

Mary Caroline Dannat
at the age of fourteen

Protestant Episcopal Church. I passed through the course of its principal Seminary. I read many Catholic books. I tried to open my intellect and heart to God's light; but much as I wished to do so, I never entered a Catholic church nor sought the counsel of a Catholic priest, until the happy day when, upon my knees, I begged admission to what I knew to be the one fold of Christ. All human influence around me would have kept me where all my worldly ties were, but I felt that the voice of my conscience was more to me than any earthly attraction. If there was one church founded by my Lord, I must seek and find it. And so I sought that haven of rest, and placed my feet upon the rock of Peter. There were some worldly sacrifices, but although they sobered my face a little, they did not drive the sunshine from my heart. At last I was in my Father's house; and never from that moment have I had one doubt about the truth of the Catholic Religion."

After his reception into the Church, in November, 1849, he spent the whole of the following year at St. Joseph's Seminary, Fordham, N. Y., in preparation for the priesthood, and in the autumn of the next year he received

sacred orders at the hands of the Right Rev. John McCloskey, then Bishop of Albany. Father Preston's first mission was that of curate of the old Cathedral in Mott Street. Shortly afterwards he was sent to Yonkers, but in 1853 Archbishop Hughes recalled him to New York to take the position of Chancellor of the Archdiocese. This office he discharged with great credit and efficiency until 1862, when he assumed pastoral charge of St. Ann's Church in Eighth Street.

Meanwhile, the grace of God was manifesting itself elsewhere in the conversion of the woman who was destined to become the actual foundress and first Superior of the Sisterhood of the Divine Compassion.

MOTHER MARY VERONICA

Mother Mary Veronica

MARY CAROLINE DANNAT, daughter of William Henry Dannat and Susanna Jones, was born in the City of New York on April 27, 1838. She was the oldest of six children. There do not appear to have been any particular religious influences at work in the home of her earlier childhood; for in a diary of later years, in which she records impersonally some facts and impressions of her life, she speaks of the death of a younger brother, when she herself was about eleven years old, in the following terms: "In 1849 her parents received a great blow in the loss of a little son, born three years before. They sought consolation in religion, and began to attend the Baptist Church in Oliver Street." Mary Caroline went, of course, with them, and she seemed to have received much comfort from the practice, which developed a natural devotion and inclination toward what was virtuous and religious. She tells us how keenly she felt the loss of her little brother, which

came upon her as her first great sorrow, and this feeling no doubt contributed much to emphasize the views which caused her to see things in the supernatural light of a future life, where she would again meet the cherished child.

In the spring of the same year the parents set out for Europe. It was arranged that Mr. David Jones, a brother of Mrs. Dannat, together with his wife, should occupy the Dannat residence during the absence of the family abroad. Mary Caroline was to stay with her uncle and aunt, as she was still at school, and they were seemingly much attached to the child. It appears, however, that subsequently she was left a good deal to herself, and thus found opportunity to indulge those inclinations toward piety awakened by the death of her child brother. These were fostered, moreover, by occasional revivals and missions in the neighboring church of the Baptist community, and caused her to enlist for the time as an ardent convert to the teachings of that sect. The sincerity of the motives could not be otherwise than pleasing to God, and she became conscious, as she tells us, of a certain satisfaction and sweetness in the reflection

that she was serving Him. This feeling urged her in turn to more assiduous prayer, and awakened the sense of gratitude which developed in her soul a keen relish of the love of our Lord and a desire to promote His glory by all means in her power.

It must not be supposed, however, that the young girl, in consequence of these no doubt somewhat emotional experiences, took on that sensitive and melancholy air which might induce a withdrawal from the joys of domestic or social life. Her whole subsequent life bears witness to a sweet and genial disposition without any trace of that unhealthy shyness which is the usual result of pious self-concentration. Those who knew her only as she conversed in the circle of her religious, might still without difficulty imagine the bright figure of the young girl with her quick, self-possessed step and decided movements, looking merry sympathy out of those dark eyes which had in them that something of the flash and penetration commonly to be noticed in heroic natures. She was ever keenly attentive to all that might interest a soul eager to benefit those around her; and the gleam of cheerful kindness which so markedly

attracted the young people who came within her circle during the periods of her cloistral activity, later on, must have spontaneously drawn to her the affection of kindred souls in her early maidenhood, and influenced them toward efforts of unselfish devotion.

She was happy in the conscious realization that religion and its chief ministry, charity, is a refining element that brings its immediate satisfaction to the soul in a peace such as the world cannot give. There was to be indeed a reaction, as we shall directly see, but if God's ways are mysterious, they are ways which we may go unharmed under His leading.

In the midsummer of 1857, at the age of nineteen, she was married to a Mr. Walter S. Starr. Although the duties involved in the care of a home, and the social obligations toward the friends of their common circle which her new position entailed, could not have altered her religious convictions, she somehow experienced a change of sentiment which for a long time she was unable to explain to herself. She had moved with her husband to Brooklyn; and, anxious to keep up the stimulus of piety which her connection with the Baptist church had furnished in the past, she applied

to the Pilgrim Church, which was convenient to her new home, for admission as a regular member. This church belonged to the Congregational sect, but the difference did not much appeal to her, especially since the essential freedom of private interpretation of the Bible as a doctrinal foundation was common to both churches. Of the effect of this change she writes in her journal again as though she were speaking of some third person, as follows:

"Strange to say, the effect of this act of becoming a church member was the reverse of what might have been expected. The religious fervor which had gone with her all these years suddenly died out. She ceased to go to church, and though infrequency of church attendance is common enough among Protestants, those who are church members have lapsed far away when they cease to present themselves on Communion Sunday. She went once, perhaps, twice, to what they call 'communion.'"

She herself furnishes unconsciously the key to the explanation of this apparent indifference to an act which on former occasions she had looked upon as an important event and one fraught with the most serious consequences to the individual Christian. Hitherto she had

confined her observations of religious influence to the effects which the teaching of the Gospel produced within her own soul. She had gone to church and had there learned the precepts which Christ had taught His followers. These she applied to her own conduct, and if she found it wanting in its correspondence to the high standard of morality inculcated by the Redeemer, it humiliated her without arousing any suspicion that anyone but herself could be at fault. But now she was being brought into daily and social contact with people who had listened to these same precepts on Sunday, and demurely set their manners and faces to the somber fashion of the hour whilst sitting in the pew beneath the rhythmic intonations of the ministerial precentor, and then these same pious listeners would go and set up for the other six days of the week another standard by which they might discredit the teaching of the Gospel, not as the result of impulse or weakness, but of set purpose, a rigorous law of fashion to violate which was equivalent to ostracizing oneself from the social life, and forfeiting the right to be invited to the entertainments which a charitable hospitality has invented to cement the bonds of good fellowship.

Mrs. Starr knew her Bible by heart; and certain texts began to fix themselves in her mind. The words "Blessed are the poor in spirit" would, for instance, keep repeating themselves to her at some evening assembly where she would meet the learned, polished gentleman who preached eloquent discourses, with just a tinge of artificial make up, taking for his text some passage from the Sermon on the Mount. Yet this man, whatever he might be at heart, did not seem to assimilate the doctrine, and its influence upon his wife, whose toilets were the envy of her less dowered neighbors, appeared wholly lost. And when she in some guileless way proposed the query why its doctrine, if deemed true, was not put forth in a more emphatic and straightforward way, so as to produce its due effect, instead of being hidden and smothered down to a mere suggestion by the paraphernalia and hollow phrases of modern culture, she learned that "this would never do," and that it was quite a question of propriety if in these days a respectable minister might preach at all on the subject of the "Sermon on the Mount," because such preaching has a tendency to make the poor arrogant and the proletariat conceited,

and to foster socialism of the worst kind. Still she went on pondering such things. "Everyone that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or land, for My Name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold in this world and life everlasting!" Why, who in all that rich, prosperous congregation had forsaken anything or was disposed to make any real sacrifice of comfort or enjoyment for our Lord's sake? It was a serious puzzle to a soul at once consistent and full of charity for her fellows.

Meantime she appears to have been largely influenced by the attitude of her father, whose growing religious tendencies had led him to a somewhat more independent examination of religious claims. He had undertaken a series of speculative studies on the subject, and finally settled upon the Swedenborgian exposition of Christianity as the one which most satisfied the demands of the human heart. Herein his daughter had followed him. She trusted his keen insight into religious as well as practical matters, and had an abiding admiration for his judgment, which she believed equal only to his honesty of purpose. In his case it could not but come to pass that the

Mary Caroline Dannat
at the age of eighteen

mind of the practical man should dissipate in time the emotions which the doctrine of the New Jerusalem calls forth and plays upon: and accordingly he drifted into a rationalistic view of Christianity. This process naturally communicated itself and was shared by his daughter, who read the books which her father read, and who felt the doubts which his intellect taught him to formulate regarding a religion that builds upon feeling rather than upon the credibility of motives. In the course of the year 1866 a volume fell into her hands which was then attracting some attention on the part of the general reading public. It was the story of the Schoenberg Cotta Family, as its title indicated, and in defending the course of Luther's and Catharine von Bora's secession it wantonly attacked the Catholic faith, much of which was explained in detail, rather for the purpose of casting ridicule upon the practices of the Church. To an inquisitive nature and one disposed to be just, such reading frequently presents food for reflection, and thus produces the very contrary effect from that which is ordinarily expected or intended by the writer. She tells us that the poison of misrepresentation contained in this

book did her no harm whatever, although she had known nothing previously about the Catholic Church, and did not for some time afterwards pursue her inquiry regarding the truth of the aspersions retailed in the book. Something, however, told her that the old Church must have claims which even the abuses of them suggested, and that the deductions which religious animosity prompted were not always just or logical. With these impressions strongly upon her she must have found some occasion to act upon them, for we find her one day, during the same year, in serious conversation with her father on the subject of which a record is preserved in her notes.

"Ah, well," I said, "we stand on shifting grounds. I cannot live in this way. We must have something to rest upon. In reading history I see no institution that has withstood the shock of time and change but the Catholic Church. I think I will go there."

And to a Catholic church she went that same afternoon. The subsequent events of her life to the time of her actual reception into the Church are comparatively unimportant. Suffice it to say that after this she fre-

quented no other church, but continued to attend the Catholic service regularly. Step by step she informed herself of the doctrine here taught, until she gained the assurance of its reasonableness and sincerity. Then she applied to the priest for direction in order that she might be received into the fold.

It was at the hands of Father Preston, then parish priest of St. Ann's Church on the East side of New York, that she received her first instructions preparatory to being formally admitted into the Church. On April 11, 1868, she was baptized, and shortly after made her First Communion. Never had she been more happy than after she had taken this step, and the peace which she experienced was to last. Father Preston remained her spiritual guide, and under his prudent and prayerful direction she quickly developed that marvelous capacity for devising ingenious methods of charity which was henceforth to absorb her entire activity, and which was to associate with her in the same work kindred souls to whom she became at once a model of striving after religious perfection, and a leader in every kind of beneficent action undertaken for the love of Christ.

THE BEGINNINGS

The Beginnings

TO no one could the ardent desire which the gifted convert manifested toward aiding the struggling poor of the city be more welcome than to the devoted priest who had aided her in finding true peace of soul. He had for years been familiar with the want and wretchedness of the people who inhabited his own district, and whose misery, temporal as well as spiritual, he had sought to relieve in the daily visitations of his ministry. But he also knew that there were conditions much worse in other parts of the city where such help as was now offered him could be employed to the best advantage. One such district was that of St. Bernard's in the west portion of the city, in the neighborhood of which Mrs. Starr had lived before her reception into the Church. Accordingly he directed her attention to this quarter, and pointed out that poverty and depravity were going hand in hand, and that the remedy for the one must be applied in such wise as to reach the other.

With that womanly instinct which at once turns the heart toward sheltering the young, Mrs. Starr suggested that they open a sewing school, where the children, being brought together for the purpose of inculcating in them habits of useful thrift, might at the same time be instructed in the truths of religion. This would likewise open a way to learn more of the actual conditions, and to ascertain the further needs of those who were suffering not less from the mingled influences of evil habits and vicious agencies than from positive helplessness and ignorance how to better their condition, even if the opportunity offered itself to them to do so. The children in the sewing school would not only be helped and be bettered themselves, but they would furnish to those who could observe the key to new measures for a betterment of their surroundings by pointing out the sources of evil in the district. Mrs. Starr had already gained some experience in similar work by having offered her services to the mistress of a sewing school in the parish of St. Paul, where she became familiar with the ways of Catholic children and the catechetical methods of the parochial teachers.

The good pastor of St. Bernard's, who up to the present had been struggling practically single-handed to meet the difficulties that confronted him in the attempt at moral and social reformation of the people in his district, approved of the plan, and placed the second story of the building which had been used for a church at the disposal of Mrs. Starr for the new undertaking. She at once enlisted the co-operation of a number of ladies as earnest and fervent as herself: Mrs. L. B. Binsse, Mrs. Gen. Badeau, Mrs. D. M. Bryant, Mrs. S. N. Chalfin, Mrs. John Colvill, Mrs. L. L. Coudert, Mrs. Thos. Addis Emmet, Mrs. C. F. Elliot, Mrs. J. T. Gilbert, Mrs. Calixte Harvier, Mrs. Geo. V. Hecker, Mrs. Adrian Iselin, Mrs. E. L. Keyes, Mrs. T. F. Meagher, Mrs. James Moore, Mrs. S. N. Salomon, Miss A. M. Gilbert, Miss Kate M. Harris, and Miss Annie C. Riley. In the autumn of that same year, 1868, the school was opened. About forty children came to them during the first two weeks, and with these they organized the work of reform on a permanent basis. It is needless to say that they encountered that passive indifference and ingratitude in their charitable efforts which are so trying to

zealous souls, and also much unsuspected depravity. Despite the almost hopeless outlook for the replanting of virtue in the hearts of the children, the courage and perseverance of the good women never faltered; and once begun they faced every obstacle as it arose, until the little school had increased to two hundred and fifty regular members, by Christmas time. In the first report of the Association for Befriending Children, which grew out of this modest beginning, we are told that they met at ten o'clock in the morning, when the school was opened with a few simple prayers. After this the work previously cut and prepared was distributed and made into garments, under the supervision of the ladies. Prayers, catechism, and hymns were taught them while the fingers were kept busy, and at twelve o'clock a substantial dinner was made ready in an upper room. A short recreation followed, and the day's work was again resumed until five o'clock in the evening, when the school was dismissed.

"Before many months had passed," Mrs. Starr writes, "it was evident that this work would not rest here. Won by the care and affection shown to them, the children would

tell their sad story of want and misery and sin. Older girls, long ago lost to grace, would meet us at the door of the sewing school and implore us to help them also. But how was this to be done? They were still too ignorant and too weak in virtue to be recommended for employment, and when, indeed, we attempted to place them in institutions, we found that in some they would not be received lest they should exert a contaminating influence, whilst in others the necessary formality of a committal repelled the applicant herself and chilled her good resolutions."

Thus, the expressed unwillingness of the older girls to enter institutions already in existence, which might have received them under somewhat humiliating conditions, suggested the idea of founding a home in this neighborhood, where these abject and forsaken children of the street might find a welcome, and where the girl who was, although a child in years, old in the knowledge of evil, might hide her sorrow and shame, and be taught to lead a life of virtue and godliness.

Father Preston prepared a written prospectus of the project, which received the approbation of the Archbishop of New York, and, assisted

by the generosity of many persons who became interested in the work, a fund was collected which enabled Mrs. Starr, as President of the Association, to open, in March of 1870, the House of the Holy Family at No. 316 West Fourteenth Street. We may readily judge of its success by the fact that every one of the forty-five beds provided in the new home was filled the first night, and many of the girls who had hoped to find a place of refuge there could not be received. A systematic course of religious, economic and industrial education was instituted in the House, under the influence of which these wild and wilful children of the streets, touched by the kindness and sympathetic care of the pious women devoted to the work of training their hearts and minds, so as to make them healthy and virtuous girls and women, were gradually rendered docile and tractable.

The reformation of the children confided to their care at Holy Family was now fairly begun. Money came in as it was needed, and friends, also, with generous hands and sympathetic hearts. The faith and confidence of these friends in a work yet untried were not the least of the gracious gifts brought to the

House of The Holy Family
and
Convent of the Sisters of the Divine Compassion

Association when it was laboring under many disadvantages and difficulties inevitably connected with such an undertaking. Often, we are told by the devoted foundress, the ladies were heavy-hearted and ready to give way to the discouragements that beset them; it was at such times that the aid of these loyal friends came to the rescue and enabled the Association to withstand the trial and struggle. Each day added experiences and insight which gave some new aspect to the work, and when a year had passsed by Mrs. Starr was convinced that the "House of the Holy Family," in order to attain its object more fully, would have to be located in a more central position, where the work of the Association could be carried out with more direct efficiency. Accordingly, in May, 1871, the House of the Holy Family was transferred to No. 247 East Thirteenth Street. This part of the city was in St. Ann's parish, and thus offered the additional advantage of having the institution placed under the immediate eye and pastoral jurisdiction of Father Preston. Thus, increased facilities were opened in every direction for entering upon a part of the work which had been hitherto untouched for lack of space, —

the reclaiming of young women who were leading lives of sin. The name of the society was also changed, to answer more definitely the purpose of its agency. Henceforth it was known as the Association for Befriending Children and Young Girls.

"It has always been the purpose of the Association (we read in one of Mrs. Starr's letters) to give a large share of its attention and care to that class upon whom society most readily turns its back. From the beginning it had confined itself to the care of depraved and vagrant children, but many of the children were women in the knowledge of evil, and when the girl of fourteen had fallen as low as the girl of twenty, it seemed unreasonable to draw the line which marked the efforts at reclaiming them by a fixed limit of age. Among the children are many who have sought protection from brutal parents; likewise children who, from earliest years, have been taught to steal and to lie as a trade; children who were fed with liquor from their birth, and whose first words were those of blasphemy which they learned from their parents. The work of the Association stands therefore clearly defined. Its purpose is the reformation of young girls.

The means by which this end is attained are, on our part:

1. Shielding from notoriety and publicity.
2. Careful religious instruction.
3. Thorough industrial training.

On the part of the subject:

1. A degree of willingness to enter.
2. To remain at least six months, preferably two years.

The peculiar circumstances of each history need to become known to but one person, and even to her only in outline. The subject is cautioned to be equally reserved with others, and this secrecy as to why one is there is an essential safeguard and the prevailing spirit of the House. As to moral training, the preparation for and regular reception of the Sacraments is of course the foundation and strength *in via* of all we attempt to do. As to industrial training, the best methods of doing every kind of housework with neatness, order, and regularity are taught, and this is not the easiest of tasks. The main work is to render the children skilful in the best-paid industries, those the most advantageous in self-support."

The report from which this extract is taken, and which defines the scope of the Association's

work in such well-defined language, in regard to the second part of the means mentioned above says:

"As to willingness to enter, it is manifest that for any radical and enduring change the subject must not only desire it, but she must also co-operate in her restoration. Her good purposes may not at all times be strong and persistent, and it may sometimes be necessary to protect her against her own impulses; but our work is to reform and direct the will and to train the mind until it is convinced and voluntarily chooses good rather than evil. It is a slow process, but it will succeed in proportion to the length of probation and the capacity of the individual. Therefore we ask two years in each case in which to carry out our methods. This time is not so much needed for moral reform; but the mental training that, with the aid of Divine grace, is essential to her perseverance, and the industrial training, equally essential, are not acquired in a day. Two years at least are needed, were it only to teach the girls how to support themselves honorably. The time, therefore, spent in the House is not regarded as a forced imprisonment, but a time of

preparation for a life under new and better conditions."

In such language, simple and vigorous, does the foundress set forth the work to be done by the Association, and the spirit of sincerity as well as common-sense charity which these words breathe is an indication of the supernatural motives which governed the efforts of this worthy woman, and raised her work, with its trials and struggles, above the ordinary plane on which modern philanthropy rests its benefactions, with its glamour and love of a name and of show. A noble and blessed work, it has been called, a work humble in its beginning but marked by the Divine blessing in its course, and truly admirable in its results. These heaven-inspired efforts, with the innumerable daily sacrifices on the part of those who had pledged their lives to meet needs that could not for the time being otherwise be met, extended their consoling influences throughout the city.

The adjoining house was rented in 1872 in order to meet the growing demands upon the charity of the Association, and here the Society maintained its labor of reforming and educating the children. In 1874 an oppor-

tunity offered itself for the purchase of a property at 136 Second Avenue, which promised excellent accommodations for the Institute. The house was purchased for thirty-four thousand dollars, and the two buildings on Fourteenth Street, which had become inadequate for the work, were sold. In May of the same year the Association moved into the new and permanent House of the Holy Family. The house, when bought, was three stories high; two stories were afterwards added, an extension was made to the first floor, and laundries were built, besides other necessary repairs made at a total cost of eleven thousand dollars. It was a large, commodious house when completed, with cheerful, well-ventilated rooms, equipped with every modern appliance for health, comfort, and convenience, and with suitable accommodations for one hundred inmates. The lowest, or basement floor, is occupied by the kitchen, dining-rooms, storerooms, and bathrooms. On the first floor are the Chapel and the reception rooms. The second floor is given to the sewing rooms and wardrobes. Dormitories, infirmary, classrooms, and recreation rooms are on the third, fourth, and fifth floors. A few years later,

the house adjoining, No. 134 Second Avenue, was bought; here the first floor is used for the parlors and offices of the Association, while the upper floors communicate with the House of the Holy Family and are used in the same manner as mentioned above. The house on the other side, No. 132, was purchased at a later date, to become, as we shall see, the first Convent of the Sisterhood of the Divine Compassion.

It is interesting to read the reports for the next four or five years of the work of the Association and all the auxiliary societies which grew up around it, such as branch sewing schools, relief associations for the hospitals and prisons of the city, sodalities, and confraternities, at a time, when the country was recovering from the awful panic of 1873. It was a source of great rejoicing to the members of the Association, when, in 1877, they were able to report that during these years of almost unprecedented financial embarrassment throughout the country, they had succeeded in supporting the growing institution and paying all its current expenses.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS SISTERHOOD

Development of the Religious Sisterhood

FROM the time when the Association was first established, Father Preston, whom the Holy See honored subsequently by the title of Domestic Prelate, became conscious that in course of time it would be necessary to appeal to some Religious Community trained and prepared for such work to take up its burden. The devoted women who were giving time and means to it at present would eventually be called to their reward, and then the accumulated responsibility might devolve upon the uncertain good will of those who remained, without any guarantee that the undertaking could be carried on uninterruptedly. Some of the many existing Religious Communities might of course have been asked to take charge of the institution, but, apart from the necessity of a special adaptation to make fixed religious rules and customs suit the actual circumstances which called upon the women to go out and seek the

lost sheep as well as shelter them, there were those actually engaged in, and heart and soul devoted to, the work for which they had developed a singular capacity. Was no account to be taken of them, their ability, their willingness to carry on the good work, and their exceptional experience in what was best? They had seen the struggling growth, and had taken part in the humble beginning, and because they had spent so much energy to make the work lasting, the fatigue and the labor and the harassing trial had become dear to them, even as the sufferings of a mother for the welfare of her child are dear to her. It was quite natural then to assume that they were reluctant to leave the work in the hands of others, less devotedly attached to it and its brief but valuable traditions. Mrs. Starr, whose husband had died, and who had from that time on entirely consecrated her widowhood to this work of charity, found many earnest and pious young women who wished to devote themselves to the object of her society. They had caught her own spirit, and promised to be faithful to it. Thus, step by step, Father Preston, who had so far directed the destinies of the Association, felt himself prompted to suggest

and inaugurate the foundation of a Religious Sisterhood, which, strengthened by the graces of a common bond of fidelity to the Divine counsels, and blessed with the zeal that had marked all the previous years of the work, might perpetuate the name and purpose of the Institute. Might not the faithful workers of the Association enter upon such a course, and thus seal the labors in behalf of their neighbor by the vows to strive after personal sanctification? Monsignor Preston was a man whose most characteristic trait was probably the deliberateness and caution with which he acted in all new undertakings of importance. His quality of cautious initiative was associated with a keen legislative wisdom, as is testified by all the public acts for which in his capacity of Chancellor and Vicar General of the archdiocese he became responsible. It was therefore to be expected that in establishing a religious society, such as suggested itself to him, he would proceed with great caution and very slowly. To Mrs. Starr the inspiration of such a step was most natural, and would have called for little alteration or resolution in her own life, which was already to all intents that of a devoted active religious.

To her, therefore, the direction of Monsignor Preston was simply the voice of God, which she eagerly longed to obey. They sought further counsel from the ecclesiastical head of the diocese. "The advice and approbation of the Archbishop" writes Monsignor, "encouraged and blessed our purpose. He sympathized with our work and saw in the establishment of the proposed Religious Community not only the completion of our desires, but also the source and direction of zeal for the salvation of souls and greater usefulness in our labors."

The idea of founding a religious community whose members were to bind themselves by regular vows to continue the charitable works inaugurated under the direction of Father Preston, had, as we have said, nothing strange in it in the mind of Mrs. Starr, whose actual mode of living differed little from that of a nun devoting her time to the service of the poor, the ignorant, and the sick. The interior spirit in which she made this service contribute to her personal sanctification as well as that of those who labored with her in the same field, would have called for no change of purpose. It is true she was still "in the world," as the

term is understood when we speak of community life in which the principle and exercise of charity are not confined and accompanied by fixed forms of devotion, and under the canonical restraint of a discipline which controls all the external acts of the individual. But her heart was striving after perfection with the same singleness of aim which characterized the great saints in their early efforts to please God by the practice of self-sacrifice and the extension of the Kingdom of Heaven through active charity.

There had hitherto been also certain ties which bound her to guard the home of her family, and which were of a nature not to be set aside by what is understood to be the higher law of perfection in the acceptance of the evangelical counsels. At her husband's death she was left with the care of two little sons. Had God at that time placed before her the alternative of devoting herself to the training of these two children or of renouncing all to follow Him, she would probably have had no hesitation in making the greater sacrifice. But it was not simply a question of sacrificing her affection for them, it was a question also of preserving them from impres-

sions that might injure their future life, and no one could feel and meet this responsibility better than she. She owed them in the first place that charity which she was ever prompted and ready to give to the outcast child in the streets of the large city; and with the good sense that always distinguishes really holy people she assumed this duty without lessening her devotion to others who were in similar need of care for soul and body. It was with a view of facilitating this twofold obligation of attending to the education of her children, so far as this became a personal task, and of directing the organization of the House of the Holy Family, that she took a residence in close proximity to the latter.[1] Thus her time was closely divided in the service of her children, and of those sadder orphans to whom she sought to be mother in the higher sense of the word. But when she had accomplished the duty of a Christian mother in its truest sense, and saw that her children were both in the way of being established in a career where it was possible for them to make right use of the noble legacy of Christian principles which

[1] This was in 1882. The House of the Holy Family was No. 136 Second Avenue; her own was No. 134.

she had bequeathed to them by her teaching and example, she gave herself wholly to the work of caring for and training young girls.

The fact that in 1881 Father Preston had, in consideration of his services as Vicar General of the New York Archdiocese, been tendered the dignity of Domestic Prelate to Pope Leo XIII, whilst it did not alter the canonical status of the good priest or increase his ecclesiastical powers, yet it served to strengthen the confidence in his guidance, and brought with it also a certain influence which was likely to forestall many difficulties which ordinarily accompany the first foundation of a new Religious Order. He undertook with infinite patience and care to draw up the Rules and Constitution by which the new society was to be governed. It is not necessary here to repeat those grand and abiding maxims upon which the strife after perfection by mutual service of charity and forbearance, no less than by prayer and mortification, is based "in the religious life, as the masters of spirituality have taught us." The main outlines of the spiritual organism to promote the various forms of active charity are readily sketched, inasmuch as they are determined

by the character of the principal works to be undertaken on the part of the members, either singly or in union, but always under one directing spirit. And the means by which this organism is kept in a healthy and perfect condition is "entire consecration to our Lord," so that the members are continually drawn to "follow Him and Him only, in seeking and saving souls."

The keynote of the Rules, as well as the inspiration of the entire Constitution, is "The Divine Compassion." It is this beautiful image of a supernatural sympathy which animates all the enterprises of the Institute and operates within and without the precincts of the conventual life. The intimate study of the Sacred Heart becomes thus the daily occupation of each religious. In this sense, we read, "the Sisters are taught to be the instruments of His mercy, to breathe the spirit of His gentleness, and to draw their religious life from the tenderness of His Heart. If they can imitate Him, if they can speak His words and convey His pity to those who need it, they will be following His dear footsteps.

The principal officers of the Sisterhood of the Divine Compassion are: an Ecclesiastical

Superior General[1] a Mother Superior General,[2] an Assistant, a Mistress of Novices, and a Treasurer. There are, as in all other religious institutes, numerous minor offices.

The body of the Sisterhood is divided into two grades. In the first are numbered those whom the society finds most suitable for its major labors of teaching and guiding the children and from whose ranks the general officers of the Sisterhood are chosen. These are called the Choir Sisters. Next in order are those whose duty it is to assist the Choir Sisters in somewhat the same manner as the coadjutor priests co-operate with the professed Fathers of the Society of Jesus. This class is called the "Little Sisters." Just as these two grades differ in duty and responsibility, so the religious habit which they wear distinguishes them externally, one from the other. The Choir Sisters, in order that they might ever be mindful of their special consecration to the Compassionate Heart of Jesus, wear a habit of black woolen material, with a narrow band of crimson —

[1] This office was held by Monsignor Preston until his death in 1891.

[2] Mother Veronica held the office from 1886, the year of the Sisterhood's foundation, until her death in August, 1904.

symbolic of Precious Blood — around the edge. The head is covered with a black veil which falls to the ground at the back. The coif and bandeau are of white material. The cincture is black, and from it depends a fifteen-decade rosary, to which is attached a medal bearing on one side an image of our Divine Savior, with His hands bound, — emblematic of the virtue of obedience; around the edge of the medal runs the beautiful characteristic inscription: *Compassio Divina Amantissimi Jesu.* The reverse of the medal shows a figure of Our Blessed Lady of Sorrows, and the words: *Mater Dolorosa, dulcedo, spes nostra.* The crucifix worn by the nuns is of silver, and bears on the back the inscription: *Divina Compassio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi sit in cordibus nostris.* The second band of workers who vow their service to the divine work of Compassion is that of the "Little Sisters." Their dress differs from that of the choir nuns, in that, being consecrated to the Compassionate Heart of Mary, the band around the edge of the gown is blue instead of red.

The new Rule had thus been carefully prepared by Monsignor Preston. It required only the approbation of the Ordinary in order

Good Counsel School

that arrangements for its immediate application to community life might be made. On May 28, 1886, the Most Reverend Michael Augustine Corrigan, who had during the previous year become Archbishop as successor *cum jure* of the deceased Cardinal McCloskey, gave his blessing and solemn approbation to the Rules and Constitution of the "Sisters of the Divine Compassion." Although there could be no doubt as to who should be the first Superior of the new religious community, Mrs. Starr was far from considering herself in any other light than that of a simple co-laborer in the work which she had indeed begun; and while she had actually led the destinies of the "Holy Family" work for so many years, and felt that in yielding gladly to the suggestion of her spiritual director to assume the religious vow, she would only bind herself more closely to the task that she really loved for the sake of her Divine Master, yet she felt that there was a difference in the responsibility which should come to her were she to undertake not only the direction of the work, but also the government of a community whose members she would be bound by a sacred pledge to lead at the same time to their individ-

ual perfection. However, Monsignor Preston, acting immediately under authority from the Archbishop, prevailed upon her, simply and submissively, to accept the evident designs of Providence in assuming the general Superiorship of the new religious Institute.

Confident that the blessing of God had come upon all the work she had done during the twenty years of her conversion, and assured by Monsignor Preston that our Heavenly Father could not but assist her in so noble a work, she promptly and humbly accepted the trust placed in her, and remained as the head of the society until she went to receive her reward from the hand of God. Her name in religion was Mother Mary Veronica. A few words taken from a sketch of Mother Veronica's life, written by herself in obedience to Monsignor Preston, forcibly tell us how eagerly she and the other happy souls awaited the day when they were to receive the habit of the newly instituted Order. "June came," she said, "and still Monsignor Preston could not appoint a day, — the great day. But early in the month, he said: 'The second of July is the Feast of the Sacred Heart this year, and the feast of the Visitation, — that

shall be the day.' Then we both looked in the calendar to see what day of the week it was and we found it was the first Friday in July. So, there was the Sacred Heart, the Precious Blood, and our Blessed Mother all coming together the same day for the birth of our Sisterhood. Oh! what a day it was to our souls, — to us who had watched and waited and prayed for sixteen years! And when it came, it was like the birth of the little Child in Bethlehem."

What the new life meant for the young community only those can understand who have made the sacrifice, irrevocably sealing the compact between the soul and God, to serve Him body and soul under whatever hardships, with a firm trust in the Heavenly Bridegroom to whom the heart is espoused. How grateful Mother Veronica felt for the co-operation she received on every side may be gleaned from a letter which she writes the following year to thank those faithful laborers one and all, whose hearty co-operation and sympathy had sustained her efforts and lightened the burdens of the Institution.

"We must speak here of those who from the beginning have never failed, and to whose

untiring zeal and generosity the Institution is in a great degree indebted for its existence. For eighteen years they have worked together with the utmost devotion and unanimity of purpose, and it is worthy of note that there has never been a shadow of misunderstanding or disunion to mar the harmony of their work. May the tie that has bound them thus together, remain unbroken until the end! They have aided in establishing a work whose foundations have been laid in silent, patient, unostentatious charity. We believe that the work will stand and with it their names will be held in grateful remembrance. Their reward, too, will be great; for, directly or indirectly, they have seen the means of "turning many to justice." Of the souls that have been saved during these eighteen years, who shall speak? Of the thousands that have passed through the Institution, receiving, according to their capacity, the benefits conferred upon them, who shall tell the history? Much of it is known to God alone; but what is known to us would fill volumes; and these volumes would tell of children rescued from an atmosphere of crime and depravity, who, saved and grown to womanhood, are now good wives and mothers.

They would tell of young girls, who, led to ruin by vanity or their own hearts, have been restored to virtue, and, with a higher model before them, have begun life over again. They would tell of families reunited, whom sin had separated. They would tell of souls consecrated to God, who think one life too little in which to make reparation of the past; and, finally they would tell of souls purified even here by suffering and tears, and who are now, we believe, in the enjoyment of a blessed eternity. We have seen miracles far greater than those in which the lame walk and the blind see. We have beheld miracles of conversion and miracles of perseverance, and these so manifestly the work of God that we could only adore His power and compassion, while we acknowledged our own nothingness."

The Sisters had been living next to the House of the Holy Family since the establishment of their Order, but Mother Veronica saw in the growth of her Community the necessity of a separate and larger building, where the daily religious life of the Sisters could be carried on more thoroughly. About two years before Monsignor Preston passed from their midst he requested the Right Reverend Mon-

signor John Edwards, V. G., to locate some place in the country. In the spring of 1890, twelve acres of land situated on North Broadway, at White Plains, N. Y., valued at $50,000, were, through the able efforts of Monsignor Edwards purchased for $25,000. This property consisted of well-cultivated farming land, a fine old country mansion with beautiful lawns and shade trees, and well-stocked orchards. After the mansion had been renovated, and most of its costly furniture sold in order to meet expenses, the Sisters took possession of it and gave to it the name of "Good Counsel," which henceforth became the mother-house and the novitiate of the Sisterhood, and it was an abode which by its very name suggested happy forecasts of the blessed work to be done within its precincts.

Mother Veronica had formed a plan with Monsignor Preston to develop the work already begun in one of the houses, namely, the training and education of innocent young girls. The care and training of delinquent children has always remained the special work of the House of the Holy Family. This necessitated the erection of a new building near the mother-house. The ever-helping hand of Providence

First Novitiate at Good Counsel, 1892

again came to her aid in the form of a legacy left to her in the estate of a friend, and with this as a foundation she commenced the building of the "Good Counsel Training School" for girls, which was completed in the autumn of 1891. Success alone would not be the sign of the Divine approval. Those who had devoted themselves to following their Heavenly Spouse were to know Him by the presence of sorrow as well as by the power that protects from real harm. The new edifice of the Training School had been practically completed when God called to Him the one man who had fostered the first germs and tenderly watched and cared for the growing plant until it began to yield its first fair fruits. Monsignor Preston died on November 4, 1891. He was buried from St. Patrick's Cathedral, the late Archbishop Corrigan celebrating Solemn Pontifical Mass of Requiem. The scene itself was an inspiring one, and the tender sympathy of those who knew and loved the venerable priest lying before them, received fitting expression in the words of Archbishop Ryan, of Philadelphia, who preached the funeral sermon. "It seems almost a pity," said the preacher, "that a sermon in words should dis-

turb the still, impressive eloquence of the scene-sermon before us. Everything whispers to the intellect, heart, and imagination, and I feel my voice but silences that whisper, and that the deep, tender sounds of the Church's ritual and the Church's funeral music should alone be heard. This beautiful, widowed church, which he built and adorned, mourns over his coffin; the silent confessional, where he breathed forth pardon, peace, and consolation, speaks of him; the glorious altar, the throne of the Living God, has a voice from him as Christ's ambassador to you. . . . Few, during the century which has passed, have left a greater impress upon the history of Catholicism in America than the Founder of the Sisterhood of the Divine Compassion. Gifted by God with a keen and forcible mind, remarkable for his abilities as a preacher and controversial writer, he has left behind him, in the fruits of his life-long labors and in the character of his priestly and scholarly attainments, monuments that mark the pathway of his whole life, that will perpetuate his name and his glory, and whose results will deepen and broaden with the onward surge of time. . . . He was above all loyal to truth wher-

ever he found it, and though stern and unrelenting toward those whom it was his duty to reprimand and correct, he was withal gentle and affectionate, and realized the qualities which go to form the ideal gentleman — manly in strength, gentle in feeling and word — a man like Onias of old, modest in looks, gentle in manner, and graceful in speech. Dignified and courteous in all his actions, he made one feel when in his presence that he was a man, without forgetting that he was a priest of God. He never desired nor sought popularity. And the outside world, which appreciates to some extent, at least, its own weakness, honors the magnanimity of the man who troubles not nor cares for its passing approval, and admires him who seeks none." Such were in substance the words of the prelate who had known Monsignor Preston and mourned in him a lost friend.

Monsignor Preston was a voluminous writer, especially on religious subjects. Among his best known works are: *God and Reason*, a defence of natural religion from a Catholic viewpoint; *Reason and Revelation*, an apology for natural religion and revealed truth; *The Vicar of Christ*, on the supremacy of the

Papacy; *The Protestant Reformation; Protestantism and the Bible; The Divine Paraclete; The Divine Sanctuary*, and many other writings of a devotional character.

His last wish was to be buried among his children of the Divine Compassion, but the little chapel at White Plains was not suitable for building a crypt, and his remains lay under the high altar at the Cathedral until 1897, when they were transferred, as we shall see, to the Church which Mother Veronica erected near the mother-house.

The death of Monsignor Preston, on November 4th of 1891, created a deep void in the heart of Mother Veronica, who had looked to him always as a wise and kindly director in all that pertained to the management of the charitable work which she had undertaken, and which was growing beyond the proportions originally contemplated; and he had been too the true friend and father whom she might approach with the reverent affection of a dutiful child, and confide to him all the secret sorrows and doubts that she would naturally be bound to keep from those who could not properly estimate the motives and circumstances of her action. Although she

had acquired the habit of living continually in the presence of God, and therefore placed all her confidence upon the firm foundation of a supernatural faith, yet there were hours when that presence was veiled with darker clouds than usual, and when the gentle touch of a human hand or the sound of a fatherly voice meant so much for the steadying of the tried soul.

For a time she was left to bear the burden of responsibility alone, and if aught had been wanting to prove her the "valiant woman" of God, it was the unbroken and earnest devotion to her daily duties in the community, hiding the bitter grief in the sweet and silent resignation that shone forth from her countenance and manner. It had been Monsignor Preston's desire to be laid to rest among his children, the daughters of the Divine Compassion, of whose prayers he might be sure, and to whom his silent monument would continue to preach the lessons of loyalty to the beautiful standard of charity to which they had vowed their lives under his inspiring direction. Mother Veronica felt both the sacred obligation imposed upon her by this expression of his last will, and the benefit which the community

would derive from cherishing the memory of their founder and guide in religious perfection. She therefore at once began arrangements for the building of a suitable community chapel, with a crypt where the remains of their beloved father might be kept in prayerful, venerated remembrance. Gratitude, as with all noble souls, was a characteristic trait of her nature; and hence she would make every sacrifice to give expression, in the beauty of the work she contemplated as a memorial, to the sentiment of filial recognition to the priest who under God had been the benefactor not merely of the nuns who first accepted his rule of life, but also of all who in future would take up the sweet yoke of Christ, or be benefited by the labors of the Community of the Divine Compassion. The works that are done for God are the seeds of perennial and wondrous growth, and such was the fruit tree planted by Monsignor Preston and committed to the care of Mother Veronica and those who were to follow her in the task of watering the heavenly plant.

It is necessary to recall here that in 1890, the year before Monsignor Preston's death, a purchase had been made of twelve acres of

Crypt of the Chapel and Tomb of the Founder
Monsignor Preston

property at White Plains, in the State of New York, where the mother-house and novitiate of the Order was to be henceforth. A legacy received from the estate of George V. Hecker started the building of the Good Counsel Training School in 1891. Much larger funds would, of course, be needed to accomplish the building of a chapel. And here God's providential care which hovered over the work manifested itself in the aid which came to the community, without any recourse to those appeals to public sympathy which are the ordinary and legitimate expedients resorted to by those who serve the cause of public benefaction. An uncle of Mother Veronica, already mentioned in the earlier part of this sketch, had left an estate worth something over $200,000, which had been settled upon the mother of our foundress, and which on the death of that lady, in November, 1893, became the legitimate inheritance of her daughter, Mother Veronica. In addition to this the mother had left an estate of about $10,000, also bequeathed to the daughter. Thus the means to begin the chapel were supplied, and the plans which Mother Veronica had been quietly maturing in the confident hope of the needed assistance

could now be carried out without further delay. Archbishop Corrigan approved of the designs and expressed his appreciation of the sagacity of Mother Veronica, who had left no detail in the arrangement unconsidered. Indeed, she had wonderful talent as an artist, and the architectural designs, appointments of the interior, and other arrangements suggesting the combination of good taste with utility, were minutely considered by her before the work was begun. It was found advisable to acquire the property adjoining the one already purchased. The additional fifteen acres were appraised at $55,000.

On June, 25, 1895, the corner-stone of the chapel was laid by Archbishop Corrigan, whose friendly interest in the concerns of the Community had steadily increased with the appreciation of their noble work. In less than two years the chapel was completed, and the last day of May, 1897, marking a similar concurrence of celebration in honor of the glorious Queen of Heaven with the eve of the month of the Sacred Heart, saw its solemn opening. Archbishop Corrigan consecrated the new home of Our Blessed Lord in the Sacrament of His Love. The foundress has left to her children

Chapel of the Divine Compassion

a record of her impressions on the occasion, although she was unconscious at the time she gave it that it was meant for transmission to others in writing. As in the case of Brother Leo, who often took down in writing the words of fervent gratitude uttered by St. Francis of Assisi, so in this case the notes which give us an insight into the feelings of Mother Veronica at the time were penned down by one who felt that those who in later times might cherish her memory would be grateful for the thought. The keynote of these expressions is an intense spiritual gratitude: "What shall we give to the Lord in return for all He has given unto us in making us children of His Church, in giving us His tabernacle? Who can express the thanksgiving offered here, the spiritual joys of which we are to become partakers in this place? Is there anyone who with better reason than we can say: Lord, I have loved Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth?"

We may not delay here to describe the quaint architectural beauty of the chapel, the exterior of which was suggested by a photographic sketch in the January issue of *The Dolphin*. Suffice it to say that it is a work which in its exterior structure calls forth all

the sentiments of a conventual church, — the ancient simplicity that marks the monumental shrine of the age of faith, when stone was made to speak firmness and strength, and the forms of circle and pointed roof declared the endless round of eternal aims turning heavenward. There is a suggestion in this sanctuary amid the shading trees of solitude, the *beata solitudo* which is the abode where God is best heard, because it invites the soul to recollection and to prayer, and which contains the secret of all our joys and all our strength in very truth, as St. Bernard used to say — *Sola beatitudo.*

It is perhaps of special significance at this time, when our Holy Father insists upon the reintroduction of that beautiful art in church music which is the ancient inheritance of the sanctuary, to call attention here to the fact that Mother Veronica had an intense devotion to the proper cultivation of church music. It was with her, apart from any ecclesiastical ordinance or law, an instinctive clinging to what the Church loves and approves as the truest expression of devotion in her service. Hence she inculcated the proper chanting, not only of the canonical office, but also the devout and careful rendering of the music which was to

accompany the liturgical functions throughout the year. She had the advantage of being herself an accomplished musician, and had left to the community a rare musical library for services of the Chapel. It was her personal care to have organized a choir to render the chant of the Church with proper dignity and solemnity; and the repertory of the convent included beautiful specimens of polyphonic music, rendered in quartette and chorus. She looked indeed to everything that was necessary or calculated to make the offices of the Church beautiful, and she added intelligent instruction to these arrangements in order that those who took part in the solemn service of the liturgy might understand them and render a truly reasonable sacrifice. Thus on the eve of the first Mass celebrated in the new chapel she gathered all her spiritual children about her and spoke to them in tender and serious words touching the importance of the occasion. We have her very words taken down by one present at the time:

"My dear children, to-morrow will be a great day for us; the day on which for the first time the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered up in our church. I want you to

enter into the spirit of it, and try to realize what the day is to us. This night can never come to you again. It can never come to anyone again. No doubt in years to come, hundreds of years from now, those who come after us will look back to this night and wonder what were our thoughts and feelings with regard to it.

"It is now seven years since our Father first spoke to me of building a church. He always looked forward to it; for the thought was a great joy to him, and since God took him the thought of the church has never been absent from my mind. To us who have prayed and worked and suffered for it, it has been the goal at which we have aimed all these years, our beacon star. And now, after two years of building and three years of preparation, we lay it at the feet of our Lord with all our hearts. But to some of you who have recently come it is a new toy, a little variety in your life, something for a change. Some of you, dear children, are a little too frivolous about sacred things. I want you to be more serious. Sisters of the Divine Compassion must be earnest women, and I ask you, young sisters, to make an effort to enter into our

Rear of Chapel, showing Crypt

spirit. Those who are called to remain in union with the Passion of our Lord and the Sorrows of His Blessed Mother must bear the grave character befitting religious women. This is the spirit of the Rule, and you will never attain to it, until you have what the Scripture calls a *deep heart.* Sisters of the Divine Compassion must be deep-hearted, true-souled, strong, generous, earnest women, — not butterflies. To-morrow is not the great day, the day of consecration which we expect later, but it is a tremendous day, the day on which, for the first time, the Lord of Majesty will be lifted up in the House of God, which is an image of the eternal Temple not made with hands, where God dwells, when the bread will become the Body of Christ and the wine will become His Blood. It is an awful thought, dear children. What ought to be your gratitude to God who has brought you here and made you a part of it all; for it is truly a great privilege to be part of such a work. Think of the souls that will be drawn to God in this church, who will be led to love Him! You are to be instruments to bring this about. It is worth while to have lived and labored and suffered, if only to induce one soul to make an

act of love for God. And, dear children, the building of this church adds to your responsibilities. You have been singled out from so many others for the use and cultivation of special graces. To whom much is given much will be required, and we shall be judged according to the graces we have received. The building of this church calls you to, and lays you under, an obligation to aspire to a higher spirituality, a deeper piety. To-morrow I desire that we should be one heart and one soul in offering this church to our Lord. All of you can offer it to Him. I seem to hear Him say to some of you: 'Yes, I accept it from you because your heart goes with it.' What would all that we do amount to, unless our hearts went with it? Our Lord wants your hearts, and to-morrow let each one make this offering to Him, and with it let her offer her life, not only for the present but all her future life, her strength, every drop of her blood, her whole being; and our Lord will be pleased to accept it; and let her pray that she may be worthy."

THE CATHOLIC GIRLS' CLUB

The Catholic Girls' Club

THUS far we have traced the development of the work of the Association at the House of the Holy Family, the purchase of the mother-house and novitiate, and the building of the Good Counsel Training School, together with the chapel at White Plains, N. Y. We now come to speak of the last two departments of Mother Veronica's labors, — the establishment of a Catholic Girls' Club in New York City, and the erection of a new convent at White Plains.

As long as the girls were under the direct care of the Sisters, Mother Veronica had every hope for their ultimate reformation, but the question naturally arose, — what would keep them straight and firm in the path of virtue after they had left the Sisters' control? Monsignor Preston had indeed organized a Sodality and a Confraternity for this purpose, but the girls began to lose heart; and so Mother Veronica, with the approbation and encouragement of the Archbishop, began preparing plans

for a home, or club-house, in New York City, where the former children of the Association, and in fact all the Catholic working girls, might find a place having all the advantages and inducement which drew many of them to Protestant societies. With the Right Rev. Monsignor Edwards, Monsignor Preston's successor, as Spiritual Director, the Club began under the name of "The Working Girls' Club of the House of our Lady of the Wayside," at 37 Eighth Street, St. Mark's Place. The scope and purpose of the Club, which now boasts of one thousand or more members, were outlined in detail at the first general meeting in February, 1902. As they are the words of Mother Veronica herself, we quote a portion of them to show how admirable was the purpose of founding the society:

"The main object of the Club is self-improvement. It is to enable self-respecting girls who wish to be self-supporting to improve themselves and thus elevate themselves intellectually, socially, and morally. What do I mean by self-improvement? Let me give you a few illustrations. 1. Perhaps you were obliged to begin work before you had a fair chance to get a good education. You feel as

you grow older that this is a disadvantage to you. It is. To speak correctly, to write correctly, to read well, is a great benefit to you even from a monetary point of view. Therefore we give you the opportunity to come.

"2. Perhaps you have never learned any trade or business thoroughly. When you began to work you were glad to take whatever offered, and now you find there is no possibility of rising in it, or it is poorly paid, or it brings you in contact with a class of girls you want to avoid. You must keep working and cannot afford to stop or look for other work or learn to do it. Therefore we offer you the opportunity to come here and learn almost anything you wish to learn thoroughly. We have classes in all branches of woman's work.

"3. Perhaps you *have* had a good education; perhaps you have a satisfactory occupation. But you would like to advance yourself by acquiring some accomplishment, some art. These are always expensive and you have only your evenings. Therefore, you may come here and study music, the languages, and painting."

In the course of her address, after pointing out the many privileges and obligations of the Club-membership, Mother Veronica promised

the girls that at a later date they should have a Club organization, with one of the Sisters of the Divine Compassion as Directress, with the power of appointing officers, promoters, and representatives. On the first anniversary of the founding of the Club, October 28, 1902, the Sisters made a little change in its name; there were many "Working Girls' Clubs" under Protestant auspices, and therefore that there might be no mistake about it, the name was altered to "The Catholic Girls' Club of the House of Our Lady." Some new features were added, such as allowing self-supporting girls to reside in the House, enjoining the members to be on the lookout for positions for the unemployed girls, and requesting the girls to notify the Sisters of any illness or trouble that might befall them, so that all help and comfort could be rendered to them. The Club kept continually increasing under the fostering care of the Sisters, and as Mother Veronica recognized that the house it was then occupying had not all the advantages of a regular club-house, she sold, in March, 1904, 37 Eighth Street, St. Mark's Place, and 134 Second Avenue, and bought the two properties situated at Nos. 52 and 54 East 126th Street. These

Interior Views of the Catholic Girls' Club

two commodious houses were thoroughly renovated, an addition built for chapel and gymnasium, and newly furnished, so that to-day the Catholic working girls of New York City have a club-house equaled by none of its kind in the city, and the membership is daily growing greater.

Akin to the zeal which had animated Mother Veronica for the erection of a becoming chapel, where the Blessed Master to whom she had vowed her undivided service might make His earthly dwelling among His children, was her anxiety to build a suitable convent in which the religious could without hindrance follow the exercises of prayer and work imposed by their holy Rule. She had experienced the joy of seeing the beautiful tabernacle completed where the Divine Spouse would henceforth daily meet His daughters in that intimate communion of the Blessed Sacrament which was at once the food of their souls and the cheering light on their pathway to heaven. That chapel was at the same time an enduring memorial of the community's gratitude toward their priestly founder, whose body rested among them after his pilgrimage, and reminded them of the journey's end whither all the faithful members

of the community would follow him to the Home of the Heavenly Bridegroom. But the lack of proper accommodation for the religious and the distractions incident to inconveniently located and ill-constructed buildings, crowded rooms, and incomplete appointments gave her motherly heart much concern, and she thought earnestly and prayed fervently that she might be enabled to raise the necessary funds for an immediate beginning of a roomy religious house in which the community could enjoy and profit by the advantage of conventual life.

Accordingly she had plans drawn up in which she carefully and with her wonted attention to detail and practical utility embodied the suggestions gained from experience in her previous work. After waiting four years she secured the immediate means which warranted the undertaking of the actual work; and with the blessing of the ecclesiastical authorities she saw the first stone for the construction of the ground floor laid. The thought of having at length begun the work that seemed to complete the needful accommodation for her dear Sisters gave her intense joy. Only for a brief month was this gladness of gratitude over the accomplishment of a long-cherished

desire to lighten and animate her active supervision of the work. The foundation of the new building had been barely laid when the Divine Master knocked at the door of her cell to announce that He was ready to take her away with Him to the Mansion of religious life not built with human hands. She was to leave the completion of her task to other hands animated by the same spirit, whilst her own would now rest from toil, and the care of her heart would be converted into permanent expressions of love and gratitude.

The new convent is planned to suffice for the needs of the present and prospective community in every respect. It is a substantial and commodious structure, the simplicity of which constitutes at once its beauty and its character as the home of a religious family. But we are not here so much concerned with the architectural features and appointments of the new convent as with her who projected and laid the first foundation of it, and whose spirit pervades it as though she were still its earthly guardian.

The reader of the meager sketch we have been allowed to give thus far of Mother Veronica's work, must have formed of her a picture

which can hardly fail to be true. Yet no one who did not come into more personal contact with her, or was privileged to get those more intimate glimpses into her domestic life which reveal those natural intuitions which prompt the habitual exercise of a provident and kindly affection on the one hand and the deeper recesses of supernatural motives on the other, — no one, I say, who did not look into her more intimate life could form any adequate estimate of the fascination which Mother Veronica all unconsciously wrought upon those around her. That the Sisters, her special children, should cherish an affectionate remembrance of the solicitude she showed for their spiritual and temporal welfare during their years of novitiate and professed religious life, may be readily comprehended. They might, indeed, easily magnify the virtues they saw in her, and which became to them patterns for imitation. But we have the spontaneous testimony regarding the beauty of character and person which distinguished Mother Veronica also given by those who were not drawn to admire her merely by the halo which common interests, or what may be styled family attachments, throw about the superiors who direct our

daily lives under their protecting influence, and who make us continually feel the benefits of association with them, so as to arouse in us an abiding sense of gratitude and love. Among the friends who signified their sympathy on the occasion of the death of Mother Veronica, there were many to whom her life had appealed as a simple illustration of certain remarkable gifts, — that is to say, of those qualities of mind and heart which render a person beautiful or great in our eyes, according to the value and emphasis which we happen to place upon such possessions, whether they are the result of natural endowment or of acquired virtue. Men of business, with whom her office as directress of the many charitable interests depending upon her guidance brought Mother Veronica necessarily into communication, have expressed their keen appreciation of the singularly clear judgment in business affairs, and the ready tact with which she forestalled difficulties in matters that seemed wholly out of range of her ordinary experience. There was in her no trace of that hurried anxiety, that eager pertinacity to carry out a preconceived wish, which is so natural an accompaniment in the character of the woman who possesses what

we call genius. Genius, undoubtedly, she possessed. Her fine tastes, her intelligence of the advantages that a knowledge of art bestows, her practical aptness for any work that required esthetic sense and training were evident on all occasions. Yet, whilst order and precision might be judged to be a result of artistic appreciation, they were found in her to an extent which indicated a marvelous power of self-control, of calm deliberation and method, which made her subordinate her personal likings and views to the claims of utility and the common good. We have before us a number of the letters mentioned above, from the trustees who met her in counsel; from leading members of the Vincent de Paul Society who co-operated with her in meeting the multiform needs that called her attention and relief in the city of New York and elsewhere; from eminent and wise priests to whom she could unburden her soul at times of retreat, and when Monsignor Preston, or those who were ordinarily in position to advise her, could not be reached; and from friends near and far who enjoyed and profited by temporary or casual intercourse with her, and to whom her cordial readiness to help in every necessity, her sympathy in

troubles of soul or body, and her prudent ways were a beacon in dark hours and a consolation amid the distractions that world interests bring with them. Many such have found the keenest joy even in the far-away memory of the kindnesses received at her hand. It is needless to say that these qualities were the result of a deep and abiding sense of God's presence, which made her see all things in the light of eternity, and thus attach to them that true value which proves itself permanent and consistent with the clearest insight of which pure natural wisdom is capable.

That her actions and even her motives would not escape criticism need not astonish us. Devout persons who act from supernatural motives are under a disadvantage in the matter of being rightly judged and treated by their fellowmen, even assuming that the latter are well disposed and wish to be just. There is, first of all, the balance of the world which weighs temporal interests according to their monetary value, making no allowance for the fact that the substance which men put in the scale of their appraisements is of a volatile nature and likely to evaporate under the influence of natural heat. Spiritual-minded

people look not for size, weight, color; they know that the things which man makes shrink, dry up, or fade. With the things which God makes, it is quite different. The small seed — though it breaks and seemingly corrupts and is hidden away out of sight under the ground — grows; it seems very blight and weak, yet it forces its way through the heavy earth, without noise, without show; it seems so delicately frail and white, even as it comes forth shyly from the turf, like a sick child looking out upon the world of noisy joys; and yet in a little while the sun, which bleaches and dries to shreds the pretty colored things of our handiwork, gives it the fairest living tints of rainbow joys.

So it happens that the world forms its censures upon such acts as seem to ignore present results and which patiently wait, against appearances, for a more permanent, though ordinarily imperceptible, growth. Next there is in the calm independence of spiritual-minded people who follow seemingly unprofitable and unwise ways of their own a certain semblance of mingled pride and criticism. We can all bear the pride of the foolish, or of the worldly powerful, because they make no pre-

tense of humility; but when persons who have put out a sign that they mean to follow the counsels of perfection, calmly ignore our estimates of things and smilingly wave their hands and turn their eyes away from us, as if to say: "We do not need your help nor mind your interference," then their piety becomes irritating, all the more as there is a latent consciousness in everybody that, after all, the saints — though they may be wrong entirely — are in harmony with the teaching of the Master, who warns us against the friendship and good esteem of the world. So we feel that these holy people, whilst they seemingly go out of our way, are really in our way; and they constantly hold up a standard of right and good which says to us: "You are wrong, or, what is worse — you are bad." Thus we come sometimes to dislike holy people.

Finally, it must not be forgotten that the persons who form their superficial judgments adversely upon the doings and motives of saintly persons, receive a ready and attentive hearing in the world in which they announce their judgments; whilst the religious, against whom the foolish or malicious utter their whispered suspicion, has no power to prevent

the free currency of a slander that is repeated without contradiction and runs its way smoothly through society, because the accused or maligned is not in place to defend herself or to explain, and the scandal-mongers may safely calculate upon being listened to with interest, even by those who do not actually believe what they hear, and who may inwardly form an adverse estimate of the chatterer who makes mischief for persons who are without the means to protect their characters from the aspersions.

But to return to our subject. Mother Veronica, as we have seen, possessed in a high degree those gifts of prudence, tact, counsel, and charity, which, if not an immediate result of conscious union with God, are certainly perfected and refined by the divine intercourse which the religious life affords those who rightly approach it. It must not, however, be inferred from this habitual union with God which she experienced, that she was devoid of those charming characteristics of wit and humor which become the most powerful weapons of both correction and defence when combined with a charity that does not know how to wound. Sarcasm is a dangerous gift; yet it is

so closely allied to the kindly satire that moves in playful circles of well-aimed chastisement as to cause the one often to be mistaken for the other. Mother Veronica's wit was so transparently good-natured that no one at whom it was aimed would have called it even irony; it was the brightness of benevolence, big-hearted cleverness, or whatever else you may call the inimitable originality that wins admiration by the sudden flash of truth which, whilst revealing another's weakness, both excuse and cures it in the very act of making it known.

A lady who had been on a somewhat intimate footing with her, for a time being under her spiritual guidance, dwells on this characteristic of Mother Veronica, in a letter to one of the nuns, written after the death of the venerated Superior:

"As I write I have such a picture of her in mind that I can hardly keep myself from dwelling upon her external charm. I used to think, as I took part in the nuns' recreation and enjoyed her keen wit and the play of her bright, rare personality, how she combined every perfection in herself, wondering if it were possible for the Order to sustain such a

loss as has now befallen you. Her beautiful smile, her gentle look of quiet compassion (when some one spoke of failure or mishap), her very gestures, the movements of her perfect hands — how plainly I see it all ! . . . As you well know, she was exceedingly kind to me, and as long as I live I shall always feel my indebtedness to her for the noble example she has set, and for the living proof in her own life that we can be entirely lost and swallowed up in love of God and His holy ones. . . . What a loss, dear Sisters, how irreparable! I know God will sustain you and comfort you; but for the rest of the way you must surely go along as mourners, asking only for the happy day of reunion. It seems to me that my heart would never cease recalling some fresh cause for grief when I think of her. Already I find myself saying: 'Dear Mother, pray for me!' "

Similar have been the tokens of recognition of noble womanhood as we find it represented in Mother Veronica, on the part of many friends who knew her in the world and in religion. Those traits on which it has been the writer's privilege to dwell in these pages, as of one who knew her only from the distance

and through correspondence, are perhaps common enough, but they existed in her to a degree which gave unmistakable signs that she was what we have here attempted to indicate in barest outline, — a valiant woman in the Christian and heroic sense of the word. No doubt some day her more intimate biography will be brought forth to attest the historic value of what has been merely suggested here as pointing out the work of Mother Veronica. Those who knew her best would on that very account find it difficult to speak of her at present, when the loss of her cheering presence is still overcasting the light required to portray her in her true colors. Besides, there is a delicacy only known to the heart of a cloistered nun which prevents the exhibition of an image, however cherished, around which still cling the associations of personal intimacy. Not that these friends may not write their impressions, as Brother Leo or Celano did of St. Francis of Assisi; but a less subjective account may be the true one, and for that we must wait, to be given to the public by some Bonaventure, who can utilize the records of those whose love cherished and set down for private use the remembrance of a beautiful soul.

We should wish to have dwelt more in detail upon what we consider the central activity of Mother Veronica's Institute, — an activity which really shows her in her most characteristic features as a foundress, — namely, the fostering of the impulse to train young girls to the habit of self-improvement. The *Catholic Girls' Club for Self-improvement* is indeed only one branch of the work on which we have already dwelt, but its importance goes very far as a sort of climax by which we may measure its attitude; and for that reason we should have liked to lay particular stress upon it.

Any one who has watched the social and economic current of these days in America, must have become conscious of the fact that the lines upon which moral elevation and civic prosperity are being promoted, lie in the direction indicated by the Institute of the Divine Compassion, whose labors in one sense terminate in the establishment of the Catholic Girls' Clubs, because a girl who has been brought to the sense of the necessity of self-improvement, and then finds open for her the very best and most inviting opportunities for carrying on such improvement, has practically found

her place in society and is enabled to contribute her full share to its proper elevation and progress. What the Girls' Club has done since its beginning, at the end of 1901, may be learned from the *Official Reports* issued by the Sisters at White Plains, the mother-house of the Institute. We may here recall only the results of the first year as within the immediate scope of Mother Veronica's personal superintendence.

In October, 1902, a brief statement was issued of the standing of the Club which, having begun with an empty house on October 28, 1901, had not one prospective candidate apart from those to whom the opportunity to join the Club had been declared open. After one year's existence the Club had 400 members. It was on the last Sunday of October, when a mother who belonged to the Confraternity of the Holy Face came to Mother Veronica to ask how her daughter could learn to earn her living.

"Then and there the young girl was enrolled, began her lessons the following day, and soon after was working.

"Day by day added to the numbers.

"We opened classes as they were asked for,

and by Christmas there were twelve and the membership was fifty.

"In January, 1902, we held our first Sunday meeting, and the Right Reverend Spiritual Director addressed us, taking for his subject, 'What one woman can do.' Each month since, we have met on the first Sunday, either in New York or White Plains, and have been addressed by the Rev. T. F. Myhan, the Rev. P. N. Breslin, the Rev. Denis Lynch, S.J., and others in turn.

"As the majority of the members are Sunday-school teachers and Sodalists, we have appointed half-past four as the hour for meeting, that it may not interfere with any duty in your parish church.

"Our first social evening was in January, when Marion J. Brunowe spoke on Catholic literature. In February the Rev. Bernard J. Reilly gave a stereopticon lecture, and each month the entertainment has varied.

"After Christmas the development of our work was rapid, and when the season closed in June the record was as follows:

Lessons since November 1, 1901

Membership, June 1		200
Dressmaking	680	
Millinery	140	
Hand Sewing	33	
Sewing-machine	886	
Embroidery	140	
Stenography	419	
Typewriting	390	
Bookkeeping	113	
English Grammar	153	
French	170	
Spanish	30	
German	20	
Piano	191	
Mandolin	10	
Pipe Organ	10	
Total lessons since November 1, 1901	3,385	

At Good Counsel there was a building called Saint Stanislaüs Cottage which had been fitted up for a *Vacation House* and was opened to well-recommended, self-sustaining girls at all times of the year. From June to October, in its first season, it was full to overflowing, and hundreds of girls testify to the pleasant summer days spent there. The season in New York reopened September 15, and since then great progress has been made in the work. The *Report* goes on to say:

"In accordance with our promise last year,

having become well acquainted with you, and having tested your fidelity, we have given the Club an organization. There are a President, two Vice-Presidents, three Secretaries and Associates. These officers, who are chosen for their devotion to the work, are appointed for one year from the first Sunday in November. Their duty is to be present on certain evenings, to render such assistance in the work of the Club as may be required of them, to welcome new members and promote social intercourse. . . .

"We have made a little change in our name. At the start we were called the Working Girls' Club of the House of Our Lady of the Wayside. There are many Working Girls' Clubs under Protestant auspices, and therefore that there might be no mistake about it, we have called ourselves by the dear name of 'Catholic.'

"Then, as to the name of our Club House, to our mind the title of 'Our Lady of the Wayside' is especially appropriate, because under that invocation our Mother guides you through the great highways of the world. Our Lady of the Way! The *Madonna della Strada!* She is with you on your way to your work and to your pleasures, and unless the way is one

Cottages at Good Counsel

that she can walk in, you are on the wrong road.

"Our Lady's titles express the need of the hour. In doubt or difficulty she is our dear Lady of Good Counsel. In trial she is our compassionate Lady of Sorrows, Queen of Martyrs. And so with 'all the names by which her children call her.' To us here she must ever be our Lady of the Way, our Blessed Mother of the whole journey of life. But the name was not understood, and when applied to the Club House was easily corrupted. Therefore, we stand now and ever, please God, as the Catholic Girls' of the House of our Lady."

The methods of the Club, as thus far indicated, are a sufficiently clear demonstration of Mother Veronica's original purpose to create a medium of praiseworthy independence for young girls, especially in our large cities, such as the advocates of social settlement and kindred methods put before us on grounds of commonwealth expediency or from motives of natural virtue. Mother Veronica's aim went further and deeper. Her Girls' Club is a Catholic Club, and that differentiates it from others. Her ideas are explained in an address

to the young girls on the first anniversary of their founding. To the question, "What is the purpose of the Catholic Girls' Club?" she makes answer:

"The first impression is that it is simply to offer certain facilities for gaining a better knowledge of some trade or art. It is all that, but that is not all. It has a deeper purpose. Our main reason for existence as a Club is to offer to Catholic girls all that which up to this time they have sought from those who are strangers to their faith. We aim to organize an army of girls that shall be animated with zeal for their religion and a spirit of watchfulness and resistance to attacks and inroads upon it.

"Among all our girls I have not met twenty who have not at some time or other been members of a Protestant society. I do not depreciate the good works of Protestants. Why should I? They are all borrowed from the Church, and there are few forms of charity in existence to-day that were not set in motion by St. Vincent de Paul three hundred years ago. In the hands of Protestants at the present time almost all charities are conducted with intelligence and zeal. But, to apply the

words of St. Francis de Sales, 'However good they may be in themselves and for others, they are not good for *you*.' They attack your faith, either directly or indirectly, and if you have preserved it intact, you all know of those in whom it is dying or dead.

"The attacks on your faith are direct when you are invited to religious services, such as Bible readings, where, if you go to them, you hear the Holy Scriptures explained in contradiction to the teachings of the Catholic Church. And why do you go to these meetings? Are there not religious services enough for you in your own Church? Do you hear High Mass on Sundays? Do you go to Vespers and Benediction? Do you hear daily Mass? How few, alas, do this! Oh, no, you go for a very sordid reason. You want to stand well with them that you may go to a Protestant vacation house, or, you want to obtain a position from a certain Association. However ready they are to open their classes to you, you know well that no one obtains employment at their hands who does not place herself within their moral influence, and they are quite right in that. And so you go and sell your soul.

"'But,' a girl will say, 'it does *me* no harm.

Nothing could ever turn *me!*' True, it may not make you a Protestant, but it will make you an unfaithful Catholic, and that is worse. Go study your Catechism, my dear, and read what it says of places of worship other than your own. To make your way in the world, you risk your soul, for you disobey your Church.

"And besides it is not only presumption and placing yourself in a dangerous occasion, but it is mean and dishonorable, for you are taking benefits, if benefits they are, under false pretenses.

"Another will say, 'Yes, I have belonged to a Protestant society, but I have never heard anything against the faith there.' Did you ever hear anything in praise of it? Did you ever hear the Blessed Virgin's name uttered with love and veneration? Was your heart ever made to burn with those sweet words, the 'Sacred Heart'? Have you not felt instinctively that it was wiser to keep still about your religion? Few of you are sufficiently versed in controversy to detect the subtle poison that lies concealed in much that you hear. There are pretty hymns breathing sentimental piety that contain a heresy in every line.

"And why do you go to Protestants? They would not come to *you*. They draw the line sharply enough. Many of them have entered into a league never to employ a Catholic. They draw you only that they may win you from your faith. Believe me, they do not respect you the more for going to them.

"And if your faith is not directly attacked, you form acquaintances whose tastes and sympathies are all different from what yours ought to be. Even in ordinary intercourse you are in an atmosphere that is chilling to your soul. It is like the influence of the Godless public schools. There may be no religious teaching, but you are away from the light and warmth that flow from the Tabernacle.

"And others of you say, 'But these Protestant ladies are so nice and refined and gentle!' Indeed they are! But refinement alone will not take you to heaven. If you have not met with equal refinement and gentleness among your own people, it is your own fault. Believe me, it is to be found. Do you be refined and gentle, and you will find yourself in a circle of refinement and gentleness within your own Church.

"There is no such potent influence to refine as that which comes from the practical faith of a Catholic. Moreover, it is no outward gloss, no veneer. It is sincere, from the heart. Those good ladies, no matter how pleasing they may be, do not love the Church in which you were born; and no matter how much they veil the fact, they are against it.

"And so, my dear girls, from every motive, not the least of which is proper dignity of character and self-respect, cease to accept benefits from those who have no interest in you, other than to make a proselyte, and who will drop you very quickly unless you lend yourself to their purposes.

"And your aims must not be all selfish. You are bound in conscience to exert an influence on all other Catholic girls within your reach. You must be apostles in your sphere. The Church is attacked on all sides, openly and covertly. The children of the very poor are being taken from the care of the Sisters. Enemies of the Church who are in power have set out in their own words 'to withdraw every child from every institution however good.' Poor families, even as in Ireland, are bought, body and soul, with a little food or

fuel, or a month's rent. Libraries are multiplied where a Catholic girl, by indiscriminate reading, can lose not only her faith, but her morals. Not the poor and dependent only, but you, the intelligent, self-reliant girls, are beset with snares and dangers on all sides. When faith goes, virtue soon follows.

"And so, dear girls, in our humble sphere, quietly and modestly we preach a crusade! Not as in days of old, when all Europe wished to rescue the holy places from the hands of the Turks and infidels, but, in the words of a Jesuit martyr, to 'save Jesus in the hearts of the children,' the dear children of the Church!

"May I say it? I find in many of you a want of fervor, an indifference to Catholic practices, a coldness, a worldliness, which are the result, in part, sad to say, of your struggle for life in your business or profession or trade, or whatever it may be. But more than that, it is the mental and moral influences you have been subjected to. To one who knows, there is a vast difference between the gentle, modest bearing of the unspoiled Catholic girl and that of the self-sufficient, self-asserting girl who has learned her lessons from those who are

strangers to the standard set for her by her Church.

"Do not say, 'Oh, Mother wants to make nuns of us all !' Far from it. While the religious life is the pearl of great price, and happy are those who find it, true supernatural vocations are very rare, and God forbid that you should enter the cloister unbidden.

"But Piety is one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, not alone for the favored few, but for the whole Church. The majority of our working girls come of a race that has suffered and still suffers every privation of their Faith, and whose tenacity to it is the wonder of the world. But their descendants, because they have a little more book learning, because they are American-born, often treat their religion condescendingly, if they are not sometimes even ashamed of it.

"But, please God, we shall see a better day. We are working for betterment in the intellectual, moral, and social scale. If *we* do not need it, others do. Let us draw close the bonds that bind us; let us work together, and if each one betters not only herself, but one other, it will become in time and eternity an 'endless chain.'

Grotto of Our Lady of Good Counsel

"I think I have made clear the moral purpose of the Catholic Girls' Club, and that you will cheerfully make the promise asked of you, when you, again, like a Crusader, take the Cross which is your badge."

THE SECOND PURPOSE OF THE CLUB

The Second Purpose of the Club

THE second aim is self-improvement, and this is not only praiseworthy in itself, but it is a means to an end. The more you know the more you can do. The more you can do, the more you can earn. The more you can earn, the more self-reliant you can be; for money is indeed power, to you as much as to the millionaire. The want of money may be the most deadly snare for an unprotected girl, and a good salary with the help of God her great safeguard. Come to the Catholic Girls' Club and acquire that which will increase your salary or put you in the way of earning one."

This year the classes are as follows:

Five Cents an Hour

Dressmaking. McDowell System. Wednesday evening.

White Goods, Sewing-machine Manufacture. From 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. Five days per week.

Hand Sewing. From 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. Five days per week.

Embroidery and all kinds of fancy work. Wednesday and Friday evenings.

Millinery. Tuesday evening.

Stenography. Root work and Speed class. Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Typewriting. From 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. Five days per week.

Grammar. Tuesday and Thursday.

Pennmanship. From 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. Five days per week.

Arithmetic. Wednesday evening.

Bookkeeping. Wednesday evening.

Cooking. Friday evening.

Physical Culture. Monday evening.

Ten Cents an Hour

French. Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

German. Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Spanish. Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Twenty Cents a Half-hour

Piano. From 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. Five days per week.

Mandolin. From 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. Five days per week.

Violin. From 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. Five days per week.

Five Cents an Hour

Industrial School, for girls from nine to fifteen, on Saturdays from 10 to 12.

Gratuitous

Choir Practice. Friday evening.

Instruction in Catechism. Sunday.

"Tickets for ten lessons are purchased in advance.

"Other classes were soon opened. There were three sessions: from September 15th to December 19th; from January 5th to Passion Sunday; from Easter Monday to June 14th.

"What are the conditions of membership?

"1. To be personally known to the Rector or one of the clergy of your parish, and in such a way that he can conscientiously sign our applicant's card.

"2. To be of one mind with the spirit and purpose of the Club, and to be willing to promise that you will uphold its principles in your own life and in your influence with others.

"3. To wear the badge of the Club.

"4. To be regular in attendance on certain occasions.

"5. To pay the monthly dues.

"There are other features of the Club:

"1. Self-sustaining girls may reside in the House. At present there are but few rooms, but one of our hopes for the future is a larger house.

"2. Members are on the lookout for vacancies in their place of employment, and report them

to the Sisters that unemployed members may avail themselves of them.

3. "Should a member be ill or in trouble of any kind, if she will make it known to the Sisters, they will render every help and comfort in their power.

"4. Should a member die, three Masses will be offered for the repose of her soul.

"And now, dear girls, a last word. Each one of you here is of unblemished character. But, in your daily life, taking your part with men in the pursuit of a living, what do you not have to see and hear and know? With the entrance of women into places once occupied by men only, a laxity of morals has come about unknown before. The passion for dress goes hand in hand with freedom of manners. Veil it as we may, you know it all too well. *You* are safe so far. Help your weak sisters. Show them how they can *earn* the things they covet. If faith is not dead but only dying, the task will not be hard. Don't pass them by on the other side. Say the warning word. Tell us about them. Bring them to us. It is our vocation to help *them* as well as *you*. If we have been the means of raising your standard, give them something of what you have received.

"So shall the Catholic Girls' Club be a power in its day and generation, and only eternity will reveal 'what one woman can do.'

"The battle cry of the Crusader was,

God and Our Lady!

To this we add,

Labor and Honor!"

The Good Counsel School at White Plains, N. Y., which to-day numbers over two hundred children, is in a flourishing condition. Its educational curriculum extends through the High School and Commercial Courses. The Regents examinations and the State Grade examinations are conducted in the school, and many pupils have earned certificates from these Departments.

Education of the pupils is not limited to the above branches of study. Religious training holds the first place, while much stress is laid upon Domestic Science and Domestic Art. The girls also enjoy social activities in the form of Clubs, Reading Circles, and Athletic Sports. The work of the Sisters is supplemented by lectures from specialists on various educational subjects.

During the early development of the School, Mother Veronica had been well pleased with

the results attending the return of these girls to their homes or to whatever their calling had been. How we can see her now, during those last years, as with groups of them she walked from one end of the grounds to the other, listening to their merry chatter, sympathizing in their youthful sorrows, imparting unconsciously the grace, the love, which radiates from a soul given entirely to the service of its Creator.

During the month of June, in the year of her death, after the commencement exercises, some of the pupils about to leave for their vacations asked where Mother would spend the summer —in White Plains or in New York. "Oh," she answered, "Mother will go to the Ocean of Divine Love." Less than two months later she had indeed gone to the Ocean of Divine Love.

THE TIRED HEART LAID TO REST

The Tired Heart Laid to Rest

AND now we come to the end in our sketch of this beautiful life. Mother Veronica would have been an exception in the virgin train of those who are called to follow the Master had she been spared the pangs of almost unbroken physical suffering. Discomfort and pain are not subjects upon which the saints dwell except in thought and secret gratitude. *Secretum mecum mihi* and *Secretum regis absconditum* suggest the identical motive of that more exalted modesty which shuns to reveal to the vulgar gaze both its love and the conscious sacrifice made for it. So it was here.

Mother Veronica had been a sufferer practically all through her life. During the twenty years before her leaving the world she had passed through many serious illnesses; nevertheless she had constantly overcome the frail condition of her physical being by the energy

which compelled her to labor like a mother for her children in the interests of others who seemed to suffer more. In the convent she conducted every branch of the great work of her Sisterhood in such a manner that from her external conduct and expression one could not tell that she was afflicted, as those who observed her more closely knew or suspected, at times, with most intense pain. During the last three years of her life she took the journey every week from the mother-house to the house of the Holy Family and the Girls' Club in New York City. She would always return by train to White Plains in time for the afternoon Benediction, and while often scarcely able to speak, owing to the fatigue of the day's incessant business, she would insist upon going to the organ-loft and herself playing for Benediction. During the past year her physical strength deserted her so completely that she was forced to leave the work of the Holy Family House and the Club in other hands, although she did not cease to direct all the details by personal instruction or by letter. Thus she kept alive her interest and remained faithfully in the watch-tower to overlook the business of the community until June 28,

when by the doctor's order she was obliged to keep her bed. The Sisters who watched at her bedside say that her energy was marvelous, and that, vigorous to the last, without a sign of age upon her clear brow, she dictated letters to the different Houses, although she often found herself hardly able to speak above a whisper. By reason of the anxiety which her friends felt, and the wish of all that knew her to see preserved so precious a life, no less than eight prominent physicians were consulted to pronounce upon the symptoms of her last illness, and to suggest remedies that might restore her at least for a time. In the month of August appeared unmistakable signs that the end was approaching. About three o'clock in the afternoon of the ninth, all her spiritual children were called into the sick-room, and a few minutes before the final summons came, she said to Father Fromentin, her confessor, who knelt beside her bed, "I am going — my Father, Thy will be done." One of the Sisters had the presence of mind to ask her to bless her children. It was a touching spectacle, not to be forgotten by those who were present and realized the fact. Although sight and speech had already left her, she raised her feeble hand

and made the Sign of the Cross. It was the last token of the Mother's affection and a gesture of farewell. There was no mark of a struggle. Her soul went from that scene so peacefully and quietly that it was impossible to say when the moment of death had come. The expression on her face at the moment of death and after was that of sweet tranquillity and of a condition that knew no more pain, but indicated the peaceful slumber of a child upon the bosom of its parent.

Silently and sorrowfully the Sisters carried their dead Mother, robed in the garb of her espousals, into the chapel. There before the altar she lay until the morning of the twelfth, when they buried her, kissing the cold hands that held the vows as though she could not part from the sweet compact even now when its terms had been fulfilled. Monsignor Edwards, upon whom had devolved the duty of directing the community after Monsignor Preston's death, celebrated the Solemn Requiem. Monsignor Mooney, V. G., preached the sermon. All the members of the Order were present. Hundreds of young women, who owed their start in a new and higher life to the departed Mother, had come from the city of

Interior of the Chapel

New York and distant places to honor her memory. There was no mistaking the tribute of love, of a reverent and affectionate gratitude in return for numberless remembered acts of charity to young and old, poor and rich, as they had come within reach of her generous benevolence. Archbishop Farley pronounced the last words of Benediction according to the Ritual of the Church, and she was taken away amid sobs and tears of truest sympathy for a departed mother. She had indeed been the tenderest of mothers, as she was the strongest of friends. No one ever appealed to her without receiving a ready and helpful answer. Nothing was impossible to her, for she trusted in God, like a child; and no undertaking for His honor or for the relief of His suffering children seemed too arduous to her devoted spirit of self-sacrifice. "Women like Mother Veronica," said Monsignor Mooney in his eulogy at her funeral, "are moral factors in the world whose names live long after they are dead. Not every woman is called for the special work which it was this woman's lot to do, but she is the great soul and noble who can relinquish the world and find pleasure in sacrificing her entire life to doing good for others. What

Mother Veronica has done I need not relate in detail. What charitable work she has done before and after entering the religious state you all know. This work will be her monument. The rest is in God's hands."

Mary D. Reiss Library
Loyola Seminary
Shrub Oak, New York

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Heuser, Herman Joseph

Mother Mary Veronica